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MANAGEMENT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

U.S. Department of Agriculture

A summary of significant events of
interest to USDA management

Issue #56
March 7, 1977

EXECUTIVE ORIENTATION.....The Executive Orientation, a 20-minute sound and slide show developed for top executives, will be an integral part of USDA Management Development Programs. The orientation, which delineates the role of management through changing administrations and programs and provides an overview of the Department, will be used in EXAD and SAMS.

EXAD (Executive Workshop in Agri-Dynamics) offers participants an opportunity to critically examine the management challenges present in the Department's major programs. SAMS (Supervisory and Managerial Strategies) shows participants how to mold goals and resources into an effective plan of action. (Contact: John Kizler, OP, ext. 76977)

GAO REPORT ON SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAMS.....The General Accounting Office released a report last August entitled "Hazardous Working Conditions in Seven Federal Agencies". This report covered USDA safety management programs. Some problem areas cited were: (1) organizational level of safety management, (2) lack of facilities inspection programs, (3) lack of programs to correct unsafe conditions found in workplaces, (4) lack of procedures for responding to employee complaints of unsafe or unhealthful working conditions, (5) lack of procedures for providing training on safety and health matters for all employees, and (6) lack of Departmental evaluations for agency safety and health programs.

A task force of Department and agency personnel was established in December 1976 to develop a plan to implement the GAO recommendations. The task force report will be presented to the Assistant Secretary for Administration in early March. The Management Council will be kept apprised. (Contact: Phillip R. Mueller, OP, ext. 78247)

GAO REPORT ON CONFLICT OF INTEREST.....Agency responses to specific conflict of interest questions raised by GAO were due in the Office of Personnel on March 7. A final, consolidated report will be sent to the House and Senate Committees on Operations no later than April 1. (Contact: William J. Riley, Jr., OP, ext. 77654)

SCS-EEO COMMITTEE.....The National SCS-EEO Committee met the week of February 14 to evaluate the progress of the SCS-EEO program and to develop long and short-range plans. The Assistant Secretary for Administration, the SCS Administrator and other key SCS management officials addressed the group to express their commitment to EEO. Recommendations to improve the EEO program were discussed with top management at the conclusion of the meeting. When these recommendations become finalized, implementation plans will be developed. (Contact: Verlon Vrana, SCS, ext. 75489)

GSA STANDARD LEVEL USER CHARGES (SLUC).....The projected SLUC rates for FY 78 for assigned space are 13 percent higher than those for FY 77. Agencies have made informal complaints about rates in individual locations.

The rates can be appealed on a case-by-case basis or the Department could go for a blanket reduction if a statistical survey indicated the GSA rates were out-of-line. OO will check with agencies to see if a survey is appropriate. (Contact: Paul Denett, OO, ext. 75227)

AGRICULTURE PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS (AGPR).....The AGPR's have been amended. This update brings the majority of them current. The amendments are now being printed and will be distributed in mid-March. (Contact: Dean Smith, OO, ext. 77527)

DATA BASE DIRECTORY.....The USDA Data Base Directory (DBD) is being developed by the Office of Automated Data Systems. This Data Resource Management System will provide agency Data Management Staffs with information about on-line applications. The objectives and operational uses for the DBD are to provide: individual agency access to information about existing on-line automated data, support to Departmental interchange activities, software utilization figures for USDA computer centers and a global view of on-line processing trends.

The directory now contains information on 55 USDA data bases. Agency Management Information Systems Coordinators are now submitting additional data base descriptions for inclusion in the directory. An annual report describing USDA on-line data bases will be made available by May 1. (Contact: Roxanne Williams, ADS, ext. 72118)

KCCC/SLCC PROCUREMENT.....The congressional hold on the KCCC/SLCC procurement has been lifted and the Department expects a delegation of procurement authority shortly from GSA. (Contact: Ray Long, ADS, ext. 74789)

SENATE AGRICULTURAL SUBCOMMITTEES ANNOUNCED.....The Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry announced the following subcommittee assignments:

- ...Environment, Soil Conservation, and Forestry - Senators Eastland (Chairman), Allen, Huddleston, Melcher, Clark, Zorinsky, Helms, and Hayakawa.
- ...Agricultural Credit and Rural Electrification - Senators Allen (Chairman), McGovern, Huddleston, Hayakawa, and Curtis.
- ...Agricultural Production, Marketing, and Stabilization of Prices - Senators Huddleston (Chairman), McGovern, Eastland, Clark, Stone, Zorinsky, Melcher, Young, Helms, Curtis, and Lugar.
- ...Agricultural Research and General Legislation - Senators Leahy (Chairman), Allen, Eastland, Stone, Talmadge, Dole, Young, Hayakawa, and Lugar.
- ...Rural Development - Senators Clark (Chairman), Humphrey, Leahy, Curtis, and Bellmon.
- ...Foreign Agricultural Policy - Senators Humphrey (Chairman), Stone, Zorinsky, Talmadge, Bellmon, Dole, and Lugar.
- ...Nutrition - Senators McGovern (Chairman), Humphrey, Leahy, Melcher, Dole, Bellmon, and Helms.

Senator Talmadge is an ex officio member of each subcommittee. Senator Dole is an ex officio member of all subcommittees of which he is not a regular member.

HEARINGS ON THE FISCAL YEAR 1978 BUDGET.....The Senate Agriculture and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee has now scheduled hearings for the Department. This schedule provides for all hearings to be completed by Monday, March 14.

The House Agriculture and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee hearings will be completed by March 23.

The Forest Service is scheduled for hearings before the House Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee March 7 through March 9, and before the Senate Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee March 31 and April 5.

The Secretary will appear as follows:

House Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee -
March 7

Senate Agriculture and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee -
March 14

(Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176)

PETE DOYLE RETIRES FROM OMF.....After nearly 42 years service, Pete retired on February 25, as Chief of the Records Management Branch, OMF. Pete's entire career was spent at USDA except for 4 years with the Navy and 3 years with the World Bank. Good luck Pete.

NATIONAL FINANCE CENTER NEWS.....

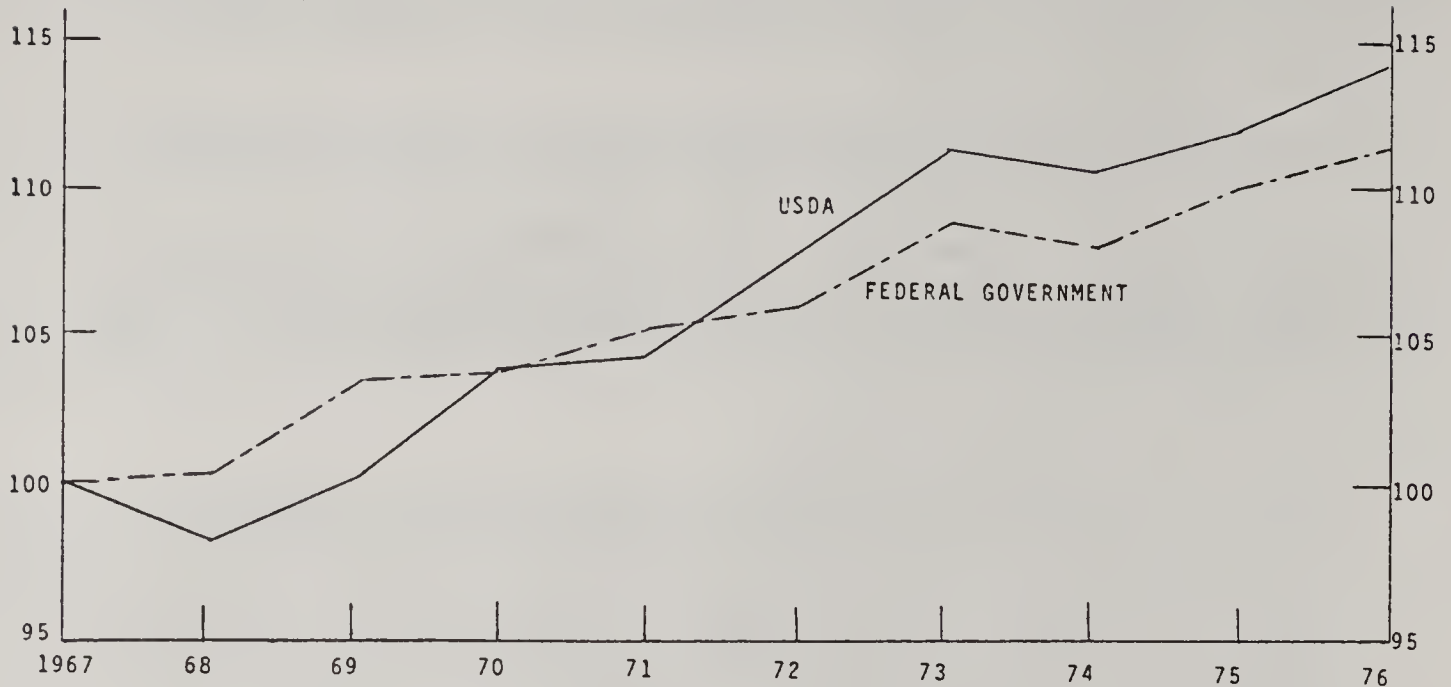
- ...Submission of Payroll Documents - The agencies' response to the request for early submission of pay period 3 T&A's and personnel and payroll documents was exceptional. As a result, 98.4% of USDA employees were paid on the primary schedule compared with the average 96% normally paid on this schedule. This difference of 2.4% is equivalent to about 2,500 employees. Continued performance of this type would ensure better and more economical services to employees and agencies.
- ...Use of Microfiche in the Inquiry Section - The use of microfiche for research in the Inquiry Section has been expanded to include 25 payment data listings formerly printed on paper. Four hundred pieces of 4 X 6 inch microfiche have replaced an estimated 114,325 pages (a stack of paper over 31 feet high). This represents an estimated annual savings of \$92,000 on paper and print costs.

OA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE.....As part of the USDA Management Plan, the Office of Audit was charged with establishing USDA audit and agency review requirements and minimizing duplication between the agencies and OA. In December 1976, an agency team was appointed to review the data compiled by OA. Their report, with recommendations, was submitted to the Assistant Secretary for Administration on February 8. These agreed upon recommendations will be provided the Council for discussion and agreement.
(Contact: Frances Naughton, OA, ext. 75100)

PRODUCTIVITY IN THE USDA AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Trend in Output-per-Employee-Year for the Total Measured Sample, FY 1967-76

Index (1967 = 100)



Data for FY 76 are preliminary

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor

This chart, based on data released by BLS, shows that USDA productivity (output per employee year) increased 14.7% compared with the 1967 base. The measured USDA sample covers about 50% of the workforce. Comparable data, covering about two-thirds of the Federal workforce, shows a productivity gain of 12.1%.

Currently, 12 USDA agencies report output and employment data on 122 activities. The Department's Management Plan outlines steps to extend productivity measurement. As part of this plan, OMF is working with staff offices to provide measurement for common service activities in agencies of the Department.

In the first annual report to the President and Congress, the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life acknowledged several ARS and FS projects which have helped to improve crop yields, farm animal weight gain efficiency and timber stand yield. Other USDA agencies with projects which enhanced national productivity (in industry, agribusiness, institutions and State and local governments) included: REA, APHIS, CSRS, ERS, ES, FNS, FAS, SCS, SRS, and NAL. The National Center stressed the importance of productivity improvement to the well-being of the country and as a key to higher living standards. (Contact: Ken Hatch, OMF, ext. 75301)